

Amendments to the Claims:

1-5 (Cancelled)

6. (New) A keyless chuck, comprising:

a generally cylindrical body defining an axis and having a forward portion and a rearward portion with respect to the axis, the forward portion including a radially outward projecting portion of the body, the body further including a plurality of guides extending obliquely to the axis and converging toward the forward portion, and a groove extending around the body;

a plurality of jaws corresponding to the plurality of guides, each jaw being slidably disposed within the respective guide and including a thread section along an outer surface thereof;

a jaw-engaging mechanism configured to operably engage the groove and to be rotatable around the body, the jaw-engaging mechanism including a thread section configured to complementarily engage the thread sections of the jaws;

a toothed member configured to extend around the body;

an inner sleeve extending over the jaw-engaging mechanism and the toothed member and configured to be capable of rotating the jaw-engaging mechanism so as to cause the jaws to move in the guides toward the forward portion;

a pair of spring members operably engaged with the inner sleeve so as to be disposed adjacent to the toothed member, one of the spring members being adapted to form a ratchet with the toothed member;

an outer sleeve extending over the inner sleeve; and

an intermediate sleeve comprised of a metal and disposed between the inner and outer sleeves so as to be capable of engaging the pair of springs, the intermediate sleeve being configured to be rotatable with respect to the inner sleeve upon application of a first torque therebetween, the intermediate sleeve, upon application of the first torque, further being configured to urge the one of the spring members into ratcheting engagement with the toothed member, and to cooperate with the other of the spring members so as to prevent rotation between the intermediate sleeve and the inner sleeve, upon application therebetween of a second torque greater than the first torque, such that the ratcheting

engagement is maintained and the jaws are prevented from retracting along the guides away from the forward portion of the body.

7. (New) A chuck according to Claim 6 wherein the spring members are comprised of a metal.

8. (New) A chuck according to Claim 6 further comprising a retaining member disposed externally to the outer sleeve toward the forward portion of the body, the retaining member being operably engaged between the body and the outer sleeve so as to axially constrain the outer sleeve with respect to movement toward the forward portion of the body.

9. (New) A chuck according to Claim 6 further comprising a retaining member disposed substantially within the intermediate sleeve, the retaining member being operably engaged with and extending between the body and the intermediate sleeve, rearward of the radially outward projecting portion of the body, the retaining member being configured to axially constrain the intermediate sleeve with respect to movement toward the forward portion of the body.

10. (New) A chuck according to Claim 9 wherein the inner sleeve is press-fit with respect to and extends around the jaw-engaging mechanism.

11. (New) A chuck according to Claim 9 wherein the intermediate sleeve defines at least one circumferentially-extending slot.

12. (New) A chuck according to Claim 11 wherein the retaining member further comprises a C-shaped stop ring having at least one tab about an outer circumference thereof, the C-shaped stop ring being insertable into the intermediate sleeve such that, when the at least one tab engages the at least one circumferentially-extending slot, the C-shaped stop ring extends radially inward of the radially outward projecting portion of the body.

13. (New) A chuck according to Claim 12 wherein, when the at least one tab engages the at least one circumferentially-extending slot, the at least one tab extends radially outward adjacent the outer sleeve.

14. (New) A chuck according to Claim 9 wherein the retaining member further comprises a stop ring having a radially-extending portion, the stop ring being insertable into the intermediate sleeve so as to allow the radially-extending portion to engage the at least one circumferentially-extending slot, the stop ring further being configured to extend radially inward of the radially outward projecting portion of the body.

15. (New) A chuck according to Claim 9 wherein the retaining member is disposed rearward of the jaw-engaging mechanism.

16. (New) A method of securing a keyless chuck, the chuck including a generally cylindrical body defining an axis and having a forward portion and a rearward portion with respect to the axis, the forward portion including a radially outward projecting portion of the body, the body further including a plurality of guides extending obliquely to the axis and converging toward the forward section, and a groove extending around the body, the chuck further including a plurality of jaws corresponding to the plurality of guides, each jaw being slidably disposed within the respective guide and including a thread section along an outer surface thereof, and a jaw-engaging mechanism configured to operably engage the groove and to be rotatable around the body, the jaw-engaging mechanism including a thread section configured to complementarily engage the thread sections of the jaws, the chuck also including a toothed member configured to extend around the body, an inner sleeve extending over the jaw-engaging mechanism and the toothed member and configured to be capable of rotating the jaw-engaging mechanism so as to cause the jaws to move in the guides toward the forward portion, a pair of spring members operably engaged with the inner sleeve so as to be disposed adjacent to the toothed member, one of the spring members being adapted to form a ratchet with the toothed member, an outer sleeve extending over the inner sleeve, and an intermediate sleeve comprised of a metal and disposed between the inner and outer sleeves so as to be capable of engaging the pair of springs, the

intermediate sleeve being configured to be rotatable with respect to the inner sleeve, and, said method comprising:

applying a first torque between the metallic intermediate sleeve and the inner sleeve so as to urge the one of the spring members into ratcheting engagement with the toothed member; and

applying a second torque, greater than the first torque, between the metallic intermediate sleeve and the inner sleeve such that the intermediate sleeve cooperates with the other of the spring members so as to prevent rotation between the intermediate sleeve and the inner sleeve and to thereby maintain the ratcheting engagement to prevent the jaws from retracting along the guides away from the forward portion of the body.